DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 192 215 CG 014 671

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TITLE A Guidance Program to Increase Sexism and Racism Awareness among High School Students and Staff.
PUB DATE 2 Apr 79
NOTE 13p.: Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Personnel and Guidance Association (Las Vegas, NV, April 2-5, 1979).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Change Strategies: Course Evaluation: *Curriculum Enrichment: *Guidance Programs: High School Students: Program Descriptions: Program Implementation: *Racial Discrimination: Secondary Education: *Self Determination: *Sex Fairness: *Student Role: Training Methods

ABSTRACT

Chapter 622 refers to a Commonwealth of Massachusetts law enacted in 1971 which guarantees access to all public schools and public school programs without regard to race, color, sex, religion, or national origin. Despite the literal compliance with Chapter 622 by the Amherst Regional Schools, Third World and/or female students continued to make self-limiting choices in both academic and extracurricular school programs. An inservice guidance curriculum was developed to train students themselves to become primary implementors of the Chapter 622 regulations by actively involving them in diagnosing and counteracting racial and/or sex role stereotypic inequities. Past-course evaluations revealed significant increases in knowledge about Chapter 622 regulations, awareness of sexist and racist situations, and the ability to observe instances of sex role stereotyping and racism in their own curricular and extra-curricular school activities. (Author/HLM)

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ED192215

A Guidance Program to Increase Sexism and Racism Awareness among High School Students and Staff

American Personnel and Guidance Association
Annual Convention

April 2-5, 1979

Las Vegas, Nevada

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Introduction

The program co-ordinators of the 1979 APGA Annual Convention have asked us as both educational theorists and practitioners to examine potential new roles, constituencies, and strategies as we look ahead to counseling in the 1980s. Certainly any time is appropriate for review and self-evaluation, but the turn of another decade brings into sharp perspective the need to reflect on past struggles and achievements in order to discern a possible direction for future personal as well as professional growth. Particularly helpful in this process would be an examination of one of the major transitional issues of the guidance counseling profession in the present decade which proved, in fact, to be instrumental in the design and development of my present research.

Bernard and Fullmer (1977) in their assessment of the current status of guidance have articulated the development of a new emphasis for counselors which has emerged throughout the 1970s. This movement could be characterized as a transition of focus from the counselor who concentrates on individual self-concept and a student's freedom of self-determination to the counselor who is charged and challenged with the responsibility of dealing with cultural forces that limit personal freedom and choice. It might be professionally gratifying to us as counselors if we could attribute this growing shift in counseling emphasis to our combined sensitivity and leadership expertise in diagnosing the needs of our students in the changing context of current societal trends. More accurately,

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however, our focus has most likely shifted in response to the strong articulations of our students--particularly the voices of Third World and/or women students as they face the everyday realities of economic and social pressures where education, even in combination with a healthy self-concept, cannot provide easy access to upward mobility. It was particularly these students' voices combined with my ever-growing concern over issues of racism and sexism which challenged me to design and pilot an in-service guidance course for students at Amherst Regional High School, Amherst, Massachusetts, entitled Chapter 622-Strategies for Student Implementation.

Background

Chapter 622 refers to a Commonwealth of Massachusetts law enacted in 1971 which guarantees access to all public schools and public school programs without regard to race, color, sex, religion, or national origin. Predating Title IX of the Educational Ammendments of 1972 (the comparable Federal legislation), Chapter 622 differs in three basic areas:

(1) Title IX is concerned only with discrimination on account of sex while Chapter 622 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, and religion in addition to sex discrimination;

(2) Title IX bans sex discrimination in the employment practices of a school whereas the thrust of Chapter 622 is toward equalizing the opportunities made available to students (other Massachusetts laws do ban employment discrimination, however); and

(3) Title IX applies to any school, public or private, that receives federal financial assistance whereas Chapter 622 covers the

practices of public elementary and secondary schools.

In several areas (particularly in the area of curriculum) Chapter 622 regulations go far beyond those of Title IX in attempting to equalize educational opportunities for all students. In these cases Chapter 622 regulations must be followed. In selecting a focal point for my in-service course on racism and sexism awareness, I decided to concentrate on Chapter 622 for the following reasons:

(1) The law confronts issues of race, sex and religion in combination rather than as isolated issues. This provided a wider base for each student's personal identification with curriculum training materials.

(2) Chapter 622 regulations outline specific behaviors and implementation procedures which were a varied and replete resource for curriculum design.

(3) Choosing a piece of legislation as a primary source for instruction was compatible with the "law and order" developmental perspective which characterizes a wide range of the primarily white, middle class Amherst High School population.

(4) In many respects Amherst, having been a leader in Chapter 622 implementation on a State-wide basis, was somewhat complacent with respect to its implementation of the "spirit" of an affirmative climate as well as the letter of the legislation.

Rationale/Problem Statement

Despite the fact that Amherst Regional Schools are in literal compliance with Chapter 622, the actual representation

and participation of Third World and/or women students in both academic and extra-curricular school programs indicates that these populations continue to make self-limiting choices in response to subtle but restrictive pressures outlining appropriate and/or acceptable behaviors. Many of these pressures are not so subtle, and were called to my attention by students themselves. Their complaints ranged from threats of physical abuse from peers to charges of "benign neglect" behaviors and attitudes on the part of specific faculty members.

In the Spring of 1977 a small demographic study of class and activity rosters at Amherst Regional High School pointed out some glaring inequities in student participation which needed to be addressed. They included:

(1) underrepresentation of girls in graphic arts, industrial arts, and more advanced mathematics. For example, during the Spring 1977 semester, 92 boys were enrolled in auto repair courses whereas only nine girls were enrolled during the same semester.

(2) underrepresentation of boys in child study courses, clothing construction, and home arts. For example, 57 girls were enrolled in either child development or child study courses during the Spring 1977 semester. No boys were enrolled in these courses.

(3) underrepresentation of girls and/or minorities on the varsity football, lacrosse, hockey and baseball teams. Boys and/or minorities are underrepresented on varsity field hockey and softball teams.

(4) disproportionately high representation of minorities in special programs designed for students with motivational difficulties.

(5) underrepresentation of minorities in student governing and social programming groups.

From my own observations, reports from my students, and results from the study as cited, it became obvious that new strategies needed to be developed which would address self-limiting perspectives and/or behaviors of students and also translate the intent of Chapter 622 regulations to faculty and staff who were reinforcing stereotypic and discriminatory behaviors.

Purpose and Significance

In response to the needs cited above the present researcher developed, piloted, and evaluated an in-service guidance curriculum for Amherst High School students which trained them to be the primary implementation agents for Chapter 622 regulations. The major purpose of the course entitled Chapter 622: Strategies for Student Implementation at the local level was to provide a unique opportunity for high school students to become actively involved in diagnosing and counteracting racial and/or sex role stereotypic inequities in their own educational environment. On a larger, state-wide level, this project was also valuable in producing a curriculum handbook and training manual which is being utilized by other Massachusetts public schools as a model for implementing Chapter 622 regulations.

Theoretically this pilot program had two major innovations:

(1) It examined the dynamics of racism and sexism together rather than separately.

Out of eighty-three published descriptions of Chapter 622 implementation programs, only two made specific references to concerns of both racial and sex role stereotyping. Other programs dealt with sex role stereotyping only. The Amherst project gained a wider base of student interest by dealing broadly as well as specifically with issues of oppression, consciousness raising and confrontation methodology as an educational process.

(2) It extended the concept of "in-service education" to include the training of student educators.

Traditionally "in-service training" has been a vehicle of professional development and growth for educational staff. In Amherst, in-service participation is largely voluntary and provides choices covering a wide range of curricular areas. Consequently, when programs in racism or sexism are offered, the participant population tends to be interested, already actively involved, and bear a marked resemblance to "last year's group." Outreach to other staff members through this modality has been difficult to achieve and outreach to other community or school populations has been non-existent. However, by changing the target population of an in-service training course from staff to students and by requiring each student to implement an outside project, the Chapter 622 course was able to achieve pivotal access to a wide cross-section of parent, teacher, staff, community, and student groups.

The Study

During the Fall of 1977, Chapter 622: Strategies for Student Implementation was developed and pilot-tested on a group of ten interested Amherst Regional High School students. This course was offered for general graduation credits and required attendance at eight, two-hour evening sessions which were held on a weekly basis. Other course requirements included participation in class discussions, completion of outside reading assignments, weekly written journal entries, and a project proposal, activity, and report. Participants (6 males, 4 females; 2 Blacks, 8 whites) were chosen at random from a sample of sixty-seven students who indicated their interest on a school-wide homeroom survey. A control group of ten interested students (4 males, 6 females; 2 Blacks, 8 whites) was also selected concurrently at random for purposes of the pilot study. Both groups were pre- and posttested with instruments field tested for face and content validity and designed to evaluate changes in participants':

(a) information with respect to Chapter 622 regulations,

(b) awareness of situations which are racist and/or sex role stereotypic, and

(c) actions to implement the spirit as well as the letter of Chapter 622 regulations.

A summative course evaluation was also administered at the end of the eight sessions. Formative weekly evaluations were built into class discussions and journal requirements.

The Results

Analysis of variance and descriptive statistics were utilized to determine the significance of changes from pre- to posttesting on the information, awareness and action measures. Descriptive statistics and case study analysis of student projects and the summative evaluation results were also presented. F ratios ($\alpha = .05$) were calculated and the following conclusions were drawn from the data:

(a) There was a significant increase in the level of participants' information regarding Chapter 622 regulations due to treatment;

(b) There was a significant increase in the level of the participants' general awareness of situations that are racist and/or sex role stereotypic due to treatment;

(c) (1) There was a significant increase in the participants' ability to observe instances of sex role stereotyping and racism in their own daily in-school and out-of-school activities;

(2) There was not a significant increase in the number of the participants' reactions to observed instances of sex role stereotyping and racism in their own daily in-school and out-of-school activities;

(3) There was an increase in the quality of the participants' reactions to observed instances of sex role stereotyping and racism in their own daily lives as evidenced by sample student projects and excerpts from class journals.

Factors which may have contributed to the lack of significant results (despite raw data increases) on section c(2) above include: the difficulty of working with such a small sample size and the need for a longer (perhaps a full semester

length) treatment intervention in order to realize statistically significant qualitative change.

Conclusions

Four major conclusions are supported by the empirical data of this pilot study. They are:

(1) Chapter 622: Strategies for Student Implementation is an effective program for increasing a high school student's information about Chapter 622 regulations;

(2) Chapter 622: Strategies for Student Implementation is an effective program for increasing a high school student's awareness of situations that are racist and/or sex role stereotypic--both generally and in their own personal experiences;

(3) Chapter 622: Strategies for Student Implementation provides an effective training program for developing and implementing student compliance projects; and

(4) Chapter 622: Strategies for Student Implementation is more conducive to qualitative rather than quantitative increases in a student's reactions to situations that are racist and/or sex role stereotypic.

The present research offers a curriculum for a student in-service training course which combines legal awareness (Chapter 622 regulations) with social awareness (specifically issues of racism and sex role stereotyping). One of the greatest untapped resources for implementing change in school systems has been the students themselves. The results from this study indicate that students are in a unique position to facilitate changes in information, attitudes and actions of others when given the appropriate training and guidance.

However, it is also important that we as responsible as well as responsive counseling professionals gain the necessary awareness and training to be resources and advocates of change rather than perpetrators of individually designed adjustment programs for our students.

Reference

Bernard, Harold W. and Fullmer, Daniel W. Principles of Guidance (Second Edition). New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1977.